



**The Partnership**  
for a Drug-Free  
America®  
**California Chapter**

# **Red Ribbon Celebration**

## **October 2005**

## **Partnering with Families™**

### **Parent Toolkit**

#### **Sponsoring Organizations**

#### **The Red Ribbon Coalition**

California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs  
California Department of Education  
California Friday Night Live Partnership  
California National Guard  
California Parent-Teacher Association  
Californians for a Drug-Free Youth  
The Enrique Camarena Educational Foundation  
The Partnership for a Drug-Free America®, California  
Chapter  
U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration

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## Program Overview

A new Red Ribbon Program for California is being launched in October 2005. The theme of the program has been adopted to work in harmony with the Partnership for a Drug-Free America's national campaign Partnering with Families™. The Partnering with Families™ campaign is designed to inspire more parents and other family influencers to connect with their kids in ways that persuade them not to use drugs. The Partnering with Families™ campaign will also include comprehensive new information and resources to assist families in preventing, recognizing, and dealing with substance abuse problems.

The goal of this year's California Red Ribbon Program is to educate families on the importance of parents and caregivers having regular, ongoing communication with children and teens about the risks of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs and the benefits of a healthy, drug-free lifestyle. While Red Ribbon has typically been celebrated during the last week of October, this new program has been expanded to the entire month of October in 2005.

The 2005 Red Ribbon program's theme, **Partnering with Families™**, was inspired by the startling findings of the 2004 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATs) conducted by The Partnership for a Drug-Free America for the 17<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. This study tracks the attitudes of parents and teens toward drugs as well as teen drug use. Here are two key determinations of that study which the 2005 California Red Ribbon Program has been developed to address:

***Kids who learn a lot about the dangers of drugs from their parents  
are up to half as likely to use drugs***

***Only 32% of kids learn a lot about the risks of drugs from their parents***

### **Program Components**

1. **Weekly Talking Points** for teachers, students and their parents/caregivers around the risks of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco and the benefits of a healthy, drug-free lifestyle.
2. **A Live Drug-Free Pledge Card** for parents/caregivers and their children to sign demonstrating their commitment to maintaining an open dialogue about the dangers of these substances and the benefits of a healthy, drug-free lifestyle.
3. **A Parent Toolkit** that includes information and resources on talking with kids and teenagers about alcohol, tobacco, and drugs.

Information will be specific for grades K-8 and 9-12. A Red Ribbon website, hosted by the California Chapter of the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, will contain all program materials and links to all coalition organizations.

## DRUG-QUIZ: THE TWO MINUTE CHALLENGE

Parents, Grandparents and Caregivers, how much do you know about drugs and alcohol? Take our Two-Minute Challenge to find out.

1. By graduation time, what percent of seniors will have experimented with illegal drugs?
  - A. More than 25%
  - B. More than 50%
  - C. More than 75%
  - D. Almost 100%
2. Cigarette smoking among teens has declined significantly over the past five years.
  - A. True
  - B. False
3. Illegal drug trial by teens has declined significantly over the past five years.
  - A. True
  - B. False
4. One of the most important factors in whether kids decide to try drugs is?
  - A. How easily drugs can be obtained
  - B. Understanding the perceived risk of using drugs
  - C. Whether drugs are deemed socially unacceptable
  - D. Where the person lives
5. The most popular drug of choice among high school seniors is?
  - A. Marijuana
  - B. Alcohol
  - C. Cigarettes
  - D. Inhalants
6. Because sniffing powdered heroin doesn't require needles, it isn't very risky.
  - A. True
  - B. False
7. Most kids get their drugs from:
  - A. A friend
  - B. A family member
  - C. A dealer
  - D. A classmate
8. The leading source of information about the risks of drugs for a teen comes from?
  - A. Media
  - B. School
  - C. Internet
  - D. Parents

*See answers on page 31*

# **Knowing Your Kids**

## **TEEN TRENDS: INSIDE THE MIND OF TODAY'S TEENS**

Parents and caregivers often feel like they're way out of touch with their teens. So, what it's like being a young adult today? Here are the top five trends you should be aware of.

### **1. THEY'RE STRESSED.**

Today's teens are stressed out. Factors include school work (they have more than ever. Sure the Internet speeds things up but that just means that they're given even more work), college pressures, advanced placement courses in high school, and being overscheduled. The (stereotypical) Gen X slackers they are not.

### **2. THEY'RE HYPER-SEXUALIZED.**

Things like mini-skirts in schools, guys taking Creatine to get bulked up for sports, Real World MTV hook ups with young adults sleeping with strangers in each episode, online dating sites and Internet porn... stuff is in their face every day. Teens are trying to act older, while older people are trying to act younger. So you've got kids trying to be adults, and adults (like Baby Boomers in particular) trying to be kids. It makes for a weird dynamic – and can confuse the teen as to who's the role model? Surprisingly, kids are more mature about things than you'd expect.

### **3. FRIENDS ARE THE NEW FAMILY.**

"Well duh," you say, "a person's friends have been important to every generation. "But this cohort seems to equally value their circle of friends as their secondary family. They are far more group oriented than Gen Xers. Even if you think about Sesame Street, the show Xers grew up with ("We're all unique and different") compared to Barney, the show Gen Y grew up with ("Everybody is equal -- We're all the same.") Gen Y tends to be more conformist than Xers and Boomers were in their youth.

### **4. TRADITIONAL FAMILY HAS BEEN REDEFINED.**

Many teens report very close relationships with their parents, rather than rebellious relationships. Parents are becoming more like a friend than a parent in some cases (think Gilmore Girls -- or a dad blasting hip hop from his car while he and his son sing along.) Gen Y typically cites their mom or dad as their role models -- rather than celebrities of years past. Also, the family unit itself has changed: more single dads/moms, and stay at home dads, gay parents, parents who are dating, adopted siblings, etc.

## 5. DIVERSITY ISN'T SOMETHING THEY'RE TAUGHT – IT'S THEIR REALITY.

This generation is one-third non-Caucasian. They sometimes take diversity for granted. Just witness the infamous Justin Timberlake/Janet Jackson Super Bowl incident -- 50 years ago the scandal would've been over the interracial flirting, not just the breast-baring moment. Today, you've got popular like Degrassi where the white cheerleader flirts with the black football player, and coming out as gay in junior high/high school is normal -- not to say every teen is 100% comfortable with it -- obviously prejudice still exists --but attitudes these issues have certainly relaxed. "Live and let live -- as long as you're not hurting anyone" is the emerging philosophy.

Source: Ben Grill, Sachs Insights

## HERE IT COMES! THE FIRST YEAR OF MIDDLE SCHOOL

***"The environment plays a significant role in substance-use disorders because anything that increases an individual's exposure to alcohol or other drugs will affect his or her risk of using..."***

-- Katherine Ketcham and Nicholas A. Pace, M.D., authors of *Teens Under the Influence*

You've been anticipating this for the past few years — your child's transition from elementary school to middle school. Be warned, this is a critical time and calls for extra vigilance on your part. Your son or daughter may still seem young, but their new surroundings can put them in some mature and tempting situations.

The likelihood that kids will try drugs increases dramatically during this year. Your child is going to meet lots of new kids, seek acceptance, and start to make more — and bigger — choices. For the first time, your kids will be exposed to older kids who use Alcohol, Tobacco, or other drugs. New middle or junior high schoolers often think these older students are cool and may be tempted to try drugs to fit in.

One type of drug in particular to watch out for is Inhalants, since they tend to be abused at a very young age. Inhalants are ordinary household products that are inhaled or sniffed by children to get high — but can cause serious brain damage, among other side effects. A recent 2004 study shows that abuse of inhalants by 6th graders has increased by as much as 44 percent over a two-year period. Therefore, it's important to be aware of these harmful chemicals and be sure to educate your children on their effects as well.

To many middle-school kids, peer approval means everything and your child may make you feel unwelcome. He is going through a time where he feels as though he should be able to make his own decisions and may start to challenge your values. While your child may physically and emotionally pull away from you to establish his own identity — and may even seem embarrassed by you at times — he actually needs you to be involved in his life more than ever before.

Also, be aware that your child is going through some major physical and hormonal changes as well. Her moods may vary as she tries to come to terms with her ever-changing body and the onset of puberty. Keep yourself educated on what to expect — if you reassure her that nothing is out of the ordinary, your child can relax knowing that what she's going through is normal.

To help your child make good choices during this critical time, you should:

- Make it very clear that you do not want her to use alcohol, tobacco, Marijuana , or other drugs.
- Find out if he really understands the consequences of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.

- Get to know her friends by taking them to and from after-school activities, games, the library, and movies (while being sensitive to her need to feel independent).
- Check in with her friends' parents often to make sure you share the same anti-drug stance.
- Volunteer for activities where you can observe him at school.
- Hold a weekly family meeting to check in with each other and address problems or concerns.
- Get your kids involved with adult-supervised after-school activities.
- Give kids who are unsupervised after school a schedule of activities, limits on their behavior, household chores to accomplish, and a strict phone-in-to-you policy (along with easily accessible snacks).
- Make it easy for your child to leave a situation where alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs are being used.
- Call kids' parents if their home is to be used for a party; get assurance that no alcoholic beverages or illegal substances will be at the party.
- Set curfews and enforce them.
- Encourage open dialogue with your children about their experiences.



## **ANSWERING THE QUESTION: “DID YOU EVER USE DRUGS?”**

*The issue isn't about your past. It's about your children's **future**. What's important now is that your kids understand that you don't want them to use drugs.*

For many parents, a child's "Did you ever use drugs?" question is a tough one to answer. Unless the answer is no, most parents stutter and stammer through an answer and leave their kids feeling like they haven't learned anything — or even worse, that their parents are hypocrites. Yes, it's difficult to know what to say. You want your kids to follow your rules and you don't want them to hold your history up as an example to follow — or as a tool to use against you. But the conversation doesn't have to be awkward, and you can use it to your advantage by turning it into a teachable moment.

Some parents who used drugs in the past choose to lie about it — but they risk losing their credibility if their kids ever discover the truth. Many experts recommend that you give an honest answer — but you don't have to tell your kids every detail. As with conversations about sex, some details should remain private. Avoid giving your child more information than she asked for. And ask her a lot of questions to make sure you understand exactly why she's asking about your drug history. Limit your response to that information.

The discussion provides a great opportunity to speak openly about what attracted you to drugs, why drugs are dangerous, and why you want your kids to avoid making the same mistake. The following are good examples of the tone you can take and wording you can use:

- "I took drugs because some of my friends used them, and I thought I needed to in order to fit in. In those days, people didn't know as much as they do now about all the bad things that can happen when you take drugs."
- "Everyone makes mistakes and trying drugs was one of my biggest mistakes ever. I'll do anything to help you avoid making the same stupid decision that I made when I was your age."
- "I started drinking when I was young and, as you can see, it's been a battle ever since. Because of my drinking, I missed a big part of growing up, and every day I have to fight with myself so it doesn't make me miss out on even more — my job, my relationships, and most importantly, my time with you. I love you too much to watch you make the same mistakes I've made."

Remember, the issue isn't about your past. It's about your children's future. What's important now is that your kids understand that you don't want them to use drugs.

## **9 TIPS FROM ONE PARENT TO ANOTHER**

*Barbara Hansen is the mother of **Nicole Hansen**, a 19-year-old former **Ecstasy** and **party drug** user. Barbara, along with her husband, Barry, has worked hard to help Nicole get through this difficult and troubling time. It hasn't been easy. To help other parents, Barbara recently compiled the following advice aimed at parents and caregivers of teenage drug users and teens in recovery.*

Frantic parents frequently ask me what they should look for (or, in some cases, what they could have looked for). There are no easy ways "save" your children from the dangers of party drugs. And it's not always easy to detect drug use -- the signs of party drug use is often more difficult to detect than **Alcohol** use. I encourage all parents to **educate** themselves about drugs. In addition, I've put together a list of nine things you can do to.

1. **LOVE THEM:** This may sound simplistic, but it is essential - and more helpful to your kids than you realize. Through loving them (and I really mean **LOVING** them), you will need to exercise more patience than you've ever known in your life. The most damaging experiences for any family member is in believing they are not loved. Each person has his or her own trials to bear and perhaps they will not ever be able to entirely overcome them, but they must know they are loved unconditionally and that you are there for them.
2. **LISTEN TO THEM:** Sit quietly with your child and let him or her talk. Keep your eyes and ears open. Ask daily how your child is doing; ask if he or she has been using drugs (or if they've quit using ask if they've had any "slip ups" and if you need to help them get professional help.) My husband and I tried not to raise our voices and would suffer quietly in our own hearts knowing what our daughter was going through during the six months she was abusing drugs. I suggest to parents to open your hearts **AND** your ears without being judgmental. It's the one aspect of the relationship between a parent and a child that cannot fail.
3. **UNDERSTAND THEM:** Know how your kid ticks. Realize that your child's strength's can sometimes be their weaknesses. Nicole's strong points were definitely a double-edge sword. Her independence, loyalty, adventurousness, and trust and love for others also made her latch onto the drug scene and fall fast for the (false) friendships. It is the family's responsibility and duty to help guide children to use their strengths toward the right direction in their lives.
4. **KEEP COOL - AND REMIND THEM:** If you find out that your child is using drugs or is around users, do not lose your temper (even though you may want to). They need your patience now and mostly your love. Understand they are going through difficult times. Your child, like every child, desperately wants to feel included by his or her peers. And they often think the drug scene offers acceptance, fun, adventure, and true friendships. Which, of course, is a lie. Continue to let your child know that using drugs is wrong and damaging to them.

5. **SET RULES:** This includes setting and enforcing curfews. Be sure to insist that your child calls you at certain times to check in. Know your child's friends and whom they'll be with and where they are going. I also suggest limiting or eliminating sleepovers past age 12. From our experience this was how many young drug users began experimenting.
6. **KNOW WHAT THEY'RE UP TO:** Make sure you are not so busy that you're unaware of what your child is doing. Set up a network with your neighbors and the parents of your child's friends. Check in with each other on what they are "supposed" to be doing at each other's homes. If no one is at your house during the day, I suggest leaving your work number with a neighbor who can keep an eye on the neighborhood. Many kids leave school to do drugs in parents' homes that are at work. If a neighbor sees kids around your home, you may want them to contact you at work so you can further investigate.
7. **BE WARY OF CLUBS AND PARTIES:** A lot of people use drugs at clubs and parties, however, not all kids who go to clubs and parties are users. But it is likely. If you notice that your child is receiving unmarked mail -- be suspicious. Many organizers send out flyers. If you see flyers promoting dances and concerts and advertising "No drugs," "No drinking," and "PLUR" (peace, love, unity, respect) - realize that these mailings are from party promoters who are very aware of parents' skepticism and are often blatantly lying.
8. **GET SMART:** Do all you can to learn everything about the drug scene so that you can educate your kid correctly on the dangers of drugs. They will respect you for caring that much that you took the time to find out about today's drugs and how harmful they are. Sometimes you will just need to ride out the problem and continue to try to be there for your child. But remain firm and remind them of the harmfulness of doing drugs. If measures need to be more drastic, contact a counseling center and drug rehab to find out your options.
9. **GET HELP:** If necessary, get help for your child — but get help for yourself, too. You may need it for your own strength. Go to your church's bishop or priest; seek out a rabbi or other clergyman. And, if need be, get professional help for the rest of your family. Don't allow embarrassment or scrutiny from neighbors stop you from doing everything necessary to get your family back on a healthy course.

# **Connecting with Your Kids**

## **GET THE CONVERSATION GOING**

Starting a conversation about Alcohol, Tobacco and other drugs with your kids is never easy -- but it's also not as difficult as you may think.

Your teens may be pressing for independence but the truth is they need to hear from you. Use blocks of time such as after dinner, before bedtime, before school or on the drive to or from school and extracurricular activities to talk about drugs and why they're harmful. Take advantage of everyday "teachable moments" and, in no time at all, you'll have developed an ongoing dialogue with your child. Teachable moments refer to using every day events in your life to point out things you'd like your child to know about.

Use the following "teachable moments" as a starting point, but develop others based on your own life:

- Point out alcohol, tobacco, and drug-related situations going on in your own neighborhood. If you and your child are at the park and see a group of kids drinking or smoking, use the moment to talk about the negative effects of alcohol and tobacco.
- Use newspaper headlines or TV news stories as a conversation starter. The daily news is filled with stories that detail the consequences of alcohol and drug abuse. Talk to your child about the mother who used drugs and was arrested. Who will take care of her baby now? Did she make a good decision when she used drugs?

Watch TV with your kids, and ask them what they think. Do the shows and advertising make drug use look acceptable and routine? Or do they show its downside? How did that program make your child feel about drugs? Write a letter with your child to companies or TV networks about the messages they put out about drugs. Also remember that anti-drug advertising — such as that from the Partnership for a Drug-Free America — is a great kickoff to discussion.

## **AGE-APPROPRIATE ADVICE - YOUR PRESCHOOLER**

Believe it or not, your child's preschool years are a great time to set the stage for a drug-free life. The foundations for all healthy habits — from nutritious eating to proper hygiene — are laid down during the preschool years. And kids who resist early drug experimentation are often good at problem-solving and self-help — two of the skill sets your preschooler is beginning to develop.

One of the most wonderful things about preschoolers is how much they rely upon the adults in their lives. Perhaps at no other point in life is your approval as highly prized or your teaching as well received as during these years of unconditional devotion.

The following tips will help you work with your preschooler so that they'll grow up happy, healthy, and drug-free. (And they'll even help you have tons of fun!)

- **Talk to your child about the joys of healthy living.** Discuss how good you feel when you take care of yourself — how you can run, jump, play, and work for many hours. A great conversation starter: "I'm glad I'm healthy because it helps me..."
- **Celebrate your child's decision-making skills.** Whenever possible, let your child choose what to wear. Even if the clothes don't quite match, you are reinforcing your child's ability to make decisions.
- **Stress your child's need to take personal responsibility for his own health and well-being (self-help skills).** Your information should be concrete, relate to your child's experiences, and stated positively. Turn chores like brushing teeth, putting away toys, wiping up spills, and caring for pets into fun experiences that your child will enjoy. Break the activities down into manageable steps so that your child learns to develop plans.
- **Help your child steer clear of dangerous substances that exist in her immediate world.** Point out poisonous and harmful substances commonly found in homes, such as bleach, kitchen cleansers, and furniture polish. Read the products' warning labels out loud to your child. Explain that not all "bad" drugs have warnings on them, so she should only eat or smell food or a prescribed medicine that you, a relative, or other known caregivers give to her. Also, explain that drugs from the doctor help the person the doctor gives them to but that they can harm anyone else.
- **Help your child separate make-believe from real life.** Preschoolers give meaning to things they don't understand in order to make sense of their world — but their meaning doesn't necessarily reflect the real world. Ask your child what he thinks about a TV program or story. Let your child know about your likes and dislikes. Discuss how violence or bad decisions can hurt people.
- **Turn frustration into a learning opportunity.** If a tower of blocks keeps collapsing during a play session, work with your child to find possible solutions to the problem.
- **Tell your child how proud you are when she's helpful.** There's never a bad time to give your child a boost in the self-esteem department.

**What drugs could be in the preschooler's world?** Tobacco, Alcohol, Inhalants.

## **AGE-APPROPRIATE ADVICE - GRADES K-3**

Have you noticed something new about your child lately? Now that he or she has left the preschool years behind, a little individual is starting to sprout! The fifth through eighth years of a child's life are so exciting. They begin to figure out what makes them, well, them. But that doesn't mean your child doesn't want to hear from you — your little one is still tied to family and is eager to please you. This makes your child very open to your ideas and messages — a great time to continue talking about a healthy drug-free lifestyle.

This is also a very important time to let your child know how you feel about Alcohol, Tobacco, and other drugs. As kids spend more time out in the world — at school and with their peers — they begin to collect messages from lots of new places. They also start to take greater notice of what they hear and read in advertisements, on television, and in the movies. Your child will definitely need your help as he or she tries to make sense of all that new information. During these ongoing talks with your child, it's essential to listen. Being a good listener gives you insights into your child's world and shows you care about her concerns.

The following suggestions will help you help your child live a healthy, drug-free life:

- **Keep your discussions about tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs factual and focused on the present.** Future consequences are too distant to have any meaning. Let them know that it's not as easy to shoot a hoop or finish a puzzle while high on Marijuana, or that smoking causes bad breath.
- **Talk to your kids about the drug-related messages they receive through advertisements, the news media, and entertainment sources.** These messages may conflict with the things you've taught them. Some TV shows or movies may even glamorize drug use. Encourage your kids to ask you questions about the messages they learn in other places. And remember to ask them how they feel about the things they've heard — you'll learn a great deal about what they're thinking.
- **Consider the following topics when discussing drugs with your child: what alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs are like; why drugs are illegal; and what harm drugs can do to users.** You should also consider talking about the differences between the medicinal uses and illegal uses of drugs, and how drugs can impact the families and friends of users.
- **Set clear rules and behave the way you want your kids to behave.** Tell them the reasons for your rules. If you use tobacco or alcohol, be mindful of the message you are sending to your children.
- **Help your child explore new ways to express their feelings.** Kids who feel shy having a one-on-one conversation might open up through painting, writing, or emailing a friend or relative.

- **Work on problem solving by focusing on the types of problems kids come across.** Help them find long-lasting solutions to homework trouble, a fight with a friend, or in dealing with a bully. Be sure to point out that quick fixes are not long-term solutions.
- **Give your kids the power to escape from situations that make them feel bad.** Make sure they know that they don't have to — and shouldn't — stay in a place that makes them feel bad about themselves. Also let them know that they don't need to stick with friends who don't support them.
- **Get to know your child's friends — and their friends' parents.** Check in by phone or a visit once in a while to make sure they are giving their children the same kinds of messages you give your children.
- **Sign your kids up with community groups or programs that emphasize the positive impact of a healthy lifestyle.** Your drug-free messages will be reinforced — and your kids will have fun, learn, and make drug-free healthy friends.

**What drugs could be in the school-age child's world?** Tobacco, Alcohol, Ritalin.



## **AGE-APPROPRIATE ADVICE - GRADES 4-6**

The preteen years. It's such a great time in kids' lives. They start to consider their place in the world. They become champions of justice. They begin to use complex problem-solving skills, value their friends' opinions much more, and begin to get curious about love and sex. But for a parent, it can also be a bit of a scary time as preteens also begin to question their parents' messages.

Don't take this newfound independence as a sign that you should back off about the dangers of Alcohol, Tobacco, and other drugs. In fact, when it comes to the issue of drug use, this is one of the most important times in a child's life. Increased exposure to the "gateway drugs" of tobacco, alcohol, and Marijuana put children of this age group at immediate risk. Sure, your advice may be challenged — but it's also heard. Yes, your word is no longer law — but it stays with your child much more than he or she is willing to let on.

The following tips will help you help your child live healthy and drug-free:

- **Make sure your child knows your rules — and that you'll enforce the consequences if rules are broken.** Preteens can understand the reason for rules and appreciate having limits in place. This applies to no-use rules about tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs — as well as bedtimes and homework. Research shows that kids are less likely to use tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs if their parents have established a pattern of setting clear rules and consequences for breaking those rules.
- **Act out scenes with your child where people offer her drugs.** Give her the tools that help her out of a sticky situation and it's more likely that she'll actually get out of that situation. Kids who don't know what to say or how to get away are more likely to give in to peer pressure. Let her know that she can use you as an excuse and say: "No, my mom [or dad, aunt, etc.] would kill me if I smoked a cigarette." Make sure she knows she shouldn't continue friendships with kids who have offered her drugs.
- **Tell your child what makes him so special.** Puberty can play nasty tricks with a child's self-esteem. At times, your child may move from having good feelings about himself and his life at home and school to some feelings of insecurity, doubt, and pressure. He needs to hear a lot of positive comments about his life and who he is as an individual — not just when he brings home an A.
- **Give your children the power to make decisions that go against their peers.** You can reinforce this message through small things such as encouraging your child to pick out the sneakers he likes rather than the pair his four friends have.
- **Base drug and alcohol messages on facts, not fear.** Kids can't argue with facts but their new need for independence may allow them to get around their fears. Also, kids love to learn facts — both run-of-the-mill and truly odd. Take advantage of their passion for learning to reinforce your message about drugs. For drug and alcohol facts, visit our **Drug Guide**.



- **Let your kids know about the here-and-now problems associated with alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.** Preteens aren't concerned with future problems that might result from experimentation with tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs. They are concerned about their appearance — sometimes to the point of obsession. If they believe drug use will impair their looks and health, they are unlikely to be tempted by these practices. Tell them about the smelly hair and ashtray breath caused by cigarettes. Make sure they know that it would be hard to perform in the school play while high on marijuana.
- **Get to know your child's friends — and their friends' parents.** Check in by phone or a visit once in a while to make sure they are giving their children the same kinds of messages you give your children about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

**Help children separate reality from fantasy.** Watch TV and movies with them and ask lots of questions to reinforce the distinction between what is real and what is make-believe. Remember to include advertising in your discussions, as those messages are especially powerful.

**What drugs could be in the preteen's world?** Tobacco, Alcohol, Ritalin, Inhalants, and Marijuana.

## **AGE-APPROPRIATE ADVICE - GRADES 7-9**

Young teens view the world as a giant set of possibilities. While they're often excited to dive in and take on whatever comes their way, they also experience deep confusion about those experiences. They want to be independent and have adult responsibilities but they cling to the familiar for reassurance. They desperately want approval from other teens and are easily swayed by what their peer group feels is appropriate behavior. This is also the first time that kids really get to make choices that have a lasting impact — not just about their clothing for the day or what they want for lunch. In addition, young teens often experience huge changes in their bodies, emotional lives, and relationships. This is the time when many young people try Alcohol , Tobacco , and other drugs for the first time.

Keep in mind:

- Teens are twice as likely to use Marijuana as parents believe they are, and those teens are getting high in the places that parents think are safe havens — around school, at home, and at friends' houses. (Partnership Attitude Tracking Study)
- 46 percent of 8th graders report having tried alcohol. (Monitoring the Future 2003)
- 16 percent of 8th graders report trying an inhalant. (Monitoring the Future 2003)
- 28 percent of 8th graders have tried cigarettes. (Monitoring the Future 2003)

But you can help your teen stay healthy and drug-free — and beat the facts. First of all: Stay involved. Young teens may say they don't need your guidance, but they do — especially when it comes to choosing a group of friends to spend time with. Drug use starts as a social behavior. Even if your kids appear to shrug off your advice and rules, they're listening.

Keep the following tips in mind as you guide your kids through the young teen years:

- **Make sure your teen knows your rules — and that you'll enforce the consequences if rules are broken.** Teens can understand the reason for rules and appreciate having limits in place. This applies to no-use rules about tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs — as well as curfews and homework. Research shows that kids are less likely to use tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs if their parents have established a pattern of setting clear rules and consequences for breaking those rules.
- **Let your teen in on all the things you find wonderful about him.** He needs to hear a lot of positive comments about his life and who he is as an individual — not just when he makes the basketball team.
- **Show interest — and discuss — your child's daily ups and downs.** You'll earn your child's trust, know how to talk to each other, and won't take your child by surprise when you voice a strong point of view about drugs.

- **Tell your teen about the negative effect alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs have on physical appearance.** Teens are extremely concerned with their physical appearance. If they believe drug use will impair their looks and health, they are unlikely to be tempted by these practices. Tell them about a time you saw a friend or acquaintance get sick from alcohol — reinforce how completely disgusting it was.
- **Don't just leave your child's anti-drug education up to his school.** Ask your teens what they've learned about drugs in school and then continue with that topic or introduce new topics. A few to consider: the long-term effects that tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs have on the human body; how and why chemical dependence occurs — including the unpredictable nature of dependency and how it varies from person to person; the impact of drug use on society — societal costs of impaired health and loss of productivity; maintaining a healthy lifestyle; positive approaches to stress reduction; or setting realistic short- and long-term goals.

**What drugs could be in the preteen's world?** Tobacco, Alcohol, Ritalin, Inhalants, Marijuana, Ecstasy, Herbal Ecstasy, Cocaine/Crack, GHB, Heroin, Rohypnol, Ketamine, LSD, Mushrooms

## **AGE-APPROPRIATE ADVICE - GRADES 10-12**

Talking and making choices about Alcohol , Tobacco , and other drug use are nothing new to teens. Today's teens are savvy about drug use, making distinctions not only among different drugs and their effects, but also among trial, occasional use, and addiction. They witness many of their peers using drugs — some without obvious or immediate consequences, others whose drug use gets out of control. By now, your teen has had to make tough decisions about whether he would give in to peer pressure and experiment with drugs or go against some peers and stay clean.

All of these experiences — along with messages from you, teachers, friends, the media, and entertainment sources — have guided your teen toward his or her current attitude about drugs. By age 16, kids' exposure to drugs and their attitudes toward the messages they receive from their parents are fairly firm — but this doesn't mean you should stop talking to your teen about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. By keeping the conversation going, you'll help your teen enter his adult years healthy and ready to raise the next generation of drug-free kids.

A few tips for you and your older teen:

- **Give general messages about drug use the heave-ho — older teen needs to hear detailed and reality-driven messages.** Topics you might want to talk about with your teen include: that even trying a drug or using it occasionally can have serious permanent consequences, that anyone can become a chronic user or an addict, and the potentially deadly effects of combining drugs.
- **Emphasize what drug use can do to your teen's future.** Teens look ahead and think about their future. Discuss how drug use can ruin your teen's chance of getting into the college she's been dreaming about, landing the job she's perfect for, or joining the military and following in her father's footsteps.
- **Encourage your teen to volunteer somewhere they can see the impact drug use has on your community.** Teenagers tend to be idealistic and enjoy hearing about ways they can help make the world a better place. Help your teen research volunteer opportunities at local homeless shelters, hospitals, or victim services centers.
- **Use news reports as discussion openers.** If you see a news story about an alcohol-related car accident, talk to your teen about all the victims that an accident leaves in its wake. If the story is about drugs in your community, talk about the ways your community has changed as drug use has grown.
- **Compliment and encourage your teen for all the things he does well and for the positive choices he makes.** Let him know that he is seen and appreciated. And let him know how you appreciate what a good role model he is for his younger brother or sister, or for other kids in the community. Teens still care what their parents think. Let him know how deeply disappointed you would be if he started using drugs.

**What drugs are in the teen's world?** Tobacco, Alcohol, Ritalin, Inhalants, Marijuana, Ecstasy, Herbal Ecstasy, Cocaine/Crack, GHB, Heroin, Rohypnol, Ketamine, LSD, Mushrooms.

# **Keeping Tabs on Your Children**

## **KEEPING WATCH OVER YOUR CHILD -- MONITORING**

Monitoring is an effective way you can help your teen or tween stay drug-free, and an important thing to do — even if you don't suspect your teen is using drugs. The idea of "monitoring" your tween or teen may sound sinister, but it's actually a very simple idea that leads to great things: You know where your child is at all times (especially after school), you know his friends, and you know his plans and activities. By staying in-the-know about your child's daily schedule, you're taking an important step in keeping your child drug-free. Kids who are not regularly monitored are four times more likely to use drugs.

Because monitoring conflicts with your child's desire to be independent, he is likely to resist your attempts to find out the details of his daily whereabouts. Don't let this deter you from your goal. He may accept the idea more easily if you present it as a means of ensuring safety or interest in who he is and what he likes to do, rather than as a means of control. You need to be prepared for your child's resistance — because the rewards of monitoring are proven.

The most important time of day to monitor is after school from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Kids are at the greatest risk for abusing drugs during these hours. Call your child's school to find out about adult-supervised activities he can take part in during these hours. Encourage him to get involved with youth groups, art or music programs, organized sports, community service, or academic clubs. Follow up with your child to make sure he is actually going to the program he has chosen.

"Parents need to know what their kids are doing," says Anthony Biglan, Ph.D., a senior scientist at the Oregon Research Institute. "They can discourage behaviors that lead to drug use." Kids who are not regularly monitored by their parents are four times more likely to use drugs.

We won't mince words here: Although monitoring is one of the best ways to keep your kids off drugs, it isn't always easy. "If a child readily talks about what's going on, then monitoring happens naturally during the course of events," says Biglan. "If it doesn't happen naturally, parents need to make some rules to facilitate monitoring." That means:

- Know where your child or teen is at all times. Make sure he/she knows you're asking out of love, not because of a lack of trust.
- Personally know all of your teen's friends. Having your teen point out their friends from down the block just doesn't cut it. Know their faces and their voices. Interact with them whenever possible--without actually forcing them to play scrabble with you.
- Find out your kid's plan for the next day. Looking for something to discuss during dinner? This is a great one. "So...what're you up to tomorrow?" Easy. Right?

- Limit the time your child spends without adult supervision. The after-school hours of 3 to 6 are the most dangerous time for tweens or teens to be on their own. The potential for peer pressure or boredom leading to an after-school drug use habit are huge. If you or another adult you trust can't be home for your teen, find out about after-school programs they can get involved with.

According to Biglan, monitoring becomes critically important when kids reach middle school. Because kids go from class to class during middle school or junior high, they don't develop the close relationships they had during their earlier school years. Also, kids at this age are extremely sensitive to the beliefs of their classmates so peer pressure becomes a major contributing factor in their behaviors. Of course, monitoring doesn't mean you have to go through your child's dresser drawers. "Kids need an increasing amount of privacy as they get older and that's ok," says Biglan. But the balance between monitoring and privacy can shift if signs of drug use show up. Remember, says Biglan, "when it's time to intervene, kids' privacy issues take a backseat."

## **SETTING RULES FOR YOUR KIDS**

Contrary to some parents' fears, strict rules don't alienate kids. Although they may grumble and act cranky when you lay down the law, in the back of their minds (and hearts), they know your rules show you care. Rules about what's acceptable — from obeying curfews to insisting that they call in to tell you where they are — make children feel loved and secure.

Setting up and enforcing rules is not easy. Parents tend to avoid setting rules because they fear confrontation and unpleasantness. But the uncomfortable stuff isn't necessarily a reflection on your relationship with your child, it's just the nature of adolescence — breaking rules and pushing limits is a part of growing up.

When kids break rules, parents often overreact with harsh, disproportionate and unenforceable punishment, which undermines the effectiveness of setting rules. Instead, when you first tell your child about a new rule, discuss the consequences of breaking that rule — what the punishment will be and how it will be carried out. Consequences must go hand in hand with limits so that your child knows what the cost of breaking the rules will be. The punishments you set should be reasonable and related to the violation. For example, if you catch your son and his friends smoking, you might "ground" him by restricting his social activities for two weeks.

Punishments should only involve penalties you discussed before the rule was broken. Also, never issue empty threats. It's understandable that you'll be angry when house rules are broken, and sharing your feelings of anger, disappointment, or sadness can have a powerfully motivating effect on your child. Since we're all more inclined to say things we don't mean when we're upset, it's best to cool off before discussing consequences.

One of the most effective rules you can make is to insist that your child be in adult-supervised situations after school. Encourage her to get involved with youth groups, arts, music, sports, community service and academic clubs. Research shows that adolescents who are unsupervised after school are significantly more likely to use drugs. An example of an appropriate consequence for violating the after-school adult-supervision rule is loss of an evening's TV time.

Many parents are surprised to learn that they have an enormous influence on whether their teens will abuse drugs. Make it clear that you do not ever want your child to use Marijuana. By emphasizing your no use expectation and policy, you reduce the likelihood that she will use drugs now or later in life. Also, it will give her an excuse to fall back on when tempted to make bad decisions.

## **11 POINTS FOR PARENTS TO PROTECT THEIR KIDS**

Drug abuse can be prevented and addiction is a treatable illness.

1. Substance abuse is a preventable problem. We, as parents, are much more powerful than we think. Upsetting us is the number one reason why kids do not use drugs, and kids who learn about drug risks from parents are only half as likely to start using.
2. Get and stay closely involved with your kids' lives as they head through middle school and into high school. You won't connect well with your kids about serious health issues if you haven't been interested in the day-to-day events of interest to them – which test caused half the class to flunk, which of their friends got a part in the play, who lied to their parents and went down to the city with older kids...
3. Begin the dialogue when your kids are young. Talk early and often. It doesn't have to be a formal "birds and bees" type discussion, but should springboard off "teachable moments" -- like an incident in their town or school, a problem in your extended family, a popular music video or movie, or something on the news. Set a "no-use" expectation, including for alcohol, and make it explicit.
4. Monitor your kids. Kids whose parents supervise them closely are only half as likely to develop a drug problem. Know the "who, what, why, where, when" of their activities, compare notes with other parents, and continue this practice as kids hit middle school, even when no longer know all their friends, and friends' families.
5. Be the parent, not just the pal. Your kids already have friends, but they need parenting. Consistently enforce boundaries for your family that apply even when kids are in other settings, or with families that have different rules. Teens like to be trusted, and will feel supported by clear and consistent boundaries that are explained in advance and are based on our love and concern for their well-being.
6. Addiction is a health problem. It does not happen because someone is "a bad person," but is an illness that is in fact the number one preventable adolescent health problem. (The American Academy of Pediatrics). It is not your fault. Stigma and shame due to past ignorance and stereotypes about the problem are unwarranted. A drug disorder can take over your life, and cause you to lie, steal and act badly toward even those you love. However, addiction has a physiological basis; chronic alcohol and other drug use change the brain and body chemistry, making it hard to stop. Thirty years ago, families were told: your son needs to develop will-power to stop using cocaine... Now we know better.
7. There is hope, help and healing available for your family if someone develops a substance abuse problem. There are objective ways to assess the problem, and many new treatments. Millions of people recover their health and turn their whole lives around, even though they tend not to be as visible as the public struggles of celebrities addicted to substances.



8. Don't wait -- know the warning signs and act early. If you suspect your child has a drug or alcohol problem, you are probably right, and need to learn more about the problem and steps for helping: Intervene early, find the right type of help, and be persistent. Warning signs include sudden changes (which are otherwise unexplained) in personality, irritability and mood swings, habits and friends, excessive secrecy, and finding drug paraphernalia. There are objective "screener" short questionnaires that you can answer to determine the sort of problem you're facing. It's a myth that someone has to hit "rock bottom" before seeking and getting help. Without help, addiction tends to progress and can even, eventually, be fatal. Although earlier intervention is best, it is possible to get help at any stage of addiction, and success rates with quality treatment are comparable to those for other illnesses like diabetes, asthma, or hypertension.
9. Help is not just "rehab." Most people recover from addiction without formal, in-patient treatment, or "rehab." There are many paths to wellness, including out-patient medical help, and sometimes a combination of treatment and a 12-Step, self-help program, which holds free meetings any time during the week, near enough to get to.
10. Addiction runs in families, similar to illnesses like cancer or heart disease. Kids who have a family pattern are at much higher risk of addiction if they use drugs or alcohol at all; no recreational use can stay safely under control, particularly during the formative years of adolescence. They should talk about this, so kids are aware. If there is a problem developing, family involvement and support makes treatment work better. Everyone – the addicted child and the parents and siblings – need strong help and mutual support to solve the problem.
11. You are not alone. Substance abuse is common among teens, and drug addiction doesn't discriminate. It cuts across race, gender and economic lines, every region of this country, and every walk of life. Most people now know someone who has struggled with addiction, and one in four teenagers is not living with an addicted parent. Take heart. More than anything, families need confidence that recovery is possible, and encouragement and information and professional support to heal this problem.

# **How To Spot Drug Use**

## **IS YOUR CHILD USING DRUGS?**

The mood swings and unpredictable behavior of the tween and teen years often make it hard to tell if a child is using drugs — but there are warning signs you can watch out for. If your child exhibits one or more of the following behaviors or moods, drugs may have become a part of his or her life:

- She's withdrawn, depressed, tired, or careless about her personal grooming.
- He's hostile, uncooperative, and frequently breaks curfews.
- Her relationships with family members have deteriorated.
- He's hanging around with a new group of friends.
- Her grades have slipped, and her school attendance is irregular.
- He's lost interest in hobbies, sports, and other favorite activities.
- Her eating and sleeping patterns have changed; she's up at night and sleeps during the day.
- He has a hard time concentrating.
- Her eyes are red-rimmed and her nose is runny — but she doesn't have allergies or a cold.
- Household money has been disappearing.
- You have found any of the following in your home: pipes, rolling papers, small medicine bottles, eye drops, butane lighters, homemade pipes, or bongs (pipes that use water as a filter) made from soda cans or plastic beverage containers.

Some of these indicators can be caused by emotional problems or physical illness. Discuss the possibility with your child's doctor and, if necessary, take him in for a physical exam. If illness is not the problem, it's time to choose a course of action.

# **What To Do if They are Using**

## **10 POINTS FOR PARENTS TO INTERVENE WITH THEIR KIDS**

Intervention does not have to be a formal confrontation of the afflicted person by a group of people. It can be any number of triggers that add up to move a person along a continuum toward help-seeking and wellness. A conversation can be a powerful tool.

1. Parents should first talk privately with each other to get on the same page about how they are going to address their child. You should answer screener questions to find out the extent of the problem.
2. You should find a time to hold a conversation with your child when he or she is not high or drunk, and when they are not extremely upset or angry.
3. You should initially express love and concern for your child's safety and well-being as the basis for the concern, whether the child acknowledges this or not.
4. You should point out that, while it is the child's responsibility to grow up, it is your job as parents to make sure he or she reaches adulthood as safely as possible.
5. You should tell your child the warning signs you've observed in his or her behavior that have made you concerned, and use the findings of the screener to say that this problem warrants serious attention and family support, as well as professional help, because it can get out of control and can even be fatal. This may include negative effects of the person's substance use on you, and on those surrounding. However, it is extremely important to remain neutral and non-judgmental in tone, like a news reporter. To sum up the warning signs at this step, you should state that the pursuit of substance use despite adverse effects on yourself or others is actually the definition of "drug addiction." Don't press the child to agree on this assessment of the problem.
6. You should then listen to anything and everything the child has to say in response. If he or she brings up related problems, they should be listened to with a promise of being addressed separately. But you should reiterate that what you are addressing at the moment is substance abuse, which is serious and can be at the core of other problems.
7. Then you should follow the practice of "motivational interviewing" used by clinicians, to empower your child and get them to think about their substance use in a new way. Ask questions about what the child wants his or her life to be like at this stage – school, relationships with friends, relationships with parents, siblings, job, activities, etc. Ask how things are going in each of these areas, and listen. You are holding up a mirror on their life and letting them look at it fresh.

8. The listening step is crucial, to establish empathy and to convey that you really see and hear your child, and are taking them in. Prompt your child to consider the link between substance use and where their life is not matching up to his or her dreams and wishes. Our kids are generally not self-destructive; they want to do what serves them in their lives. They don't want to be patronized, and do want to be trusted with your expectation and full confidence that they can, and will, do the best thing for their own health and their family.
9. Ask the child -- in light of what he or she is concluding in this conversation about the substance abuse effect on his or her life -- to reassess the problem. Set a goal for getting well. Plan together some concrete next steps to find information about addiction, recovery and resources, and identify professional help that will be most suitable.
10. You and your child should understand that the conversation you just had is actually a successful "intervention," a first concrete step toward interrupting the progression of the problem and getting well. It is a good idea to reiterate again your love and caring concern for your child. Acknowledge yourselves, knowing that you need and deserve strong encouragement and support, and have the power to solve this problem together.

## **HELPING A CHILD WHO IS USING DRUGS**

If warning signs point to a child on drugs, it's time to take action. If you deal with possible drug use head-on, there's a very good chance your child can be helped. Don't spend time hiding from the problem. Spend your time helping your child. The faster you act, the faster your child can start to become well again.

Sit down with your child for an open discussion about Alcohol and drug use. Openly voice your suspicions to your child but avoid direct accusations. Do not have this conversation when your child is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, and make sure you sound calm and rational. This may mean waiting a day if he comes home drunk from a party, or if her room smells like Marijuana . Ask your child what's been going on in her life. Discuss ways to avoid using alcohol and other drugs in the future. If you need help during this conversation, get another family member, your child's guidance counselor, or physician involved.

Remember to reinforce your no-drug policy during the conversation. Be firm and enforce whatever discipline you've laid out in the past for violation of house rules. You should discuss ways your child can regain your lost trust: calling in, spending evenings at home, or improving grades.

Just like many adults, many young people deny their alcohol and other drug use. If you have strong evidence that your child is lying, you may want to have her evaluated by a health professional experienced in diagnosing adolescents with alcohol- and drug-related problems. If you decide to go this route, remember that you're trying to help your child. Don't make the doctor's appointment seem like a threat or a punishment.

If your child has developed a pattern of drug use or an addiction, you will probably need to seek professional help. If you do not know about drug treatment programs in your area, call your doctor, local hospital, state or local substance abuse agencies, or county mental health society for a referral. Your school district should have a substance abuse coordinator or a counselor who can refer you to treatment programs, too. Parents whose children have been through treatment programs can also provide information.

Drug addiction is now understood to be a chronic, relapsing disease. It may require a number of attempts before your child can remain drug-free. Don't despair if your child's first try doesn't produce long-lasting results. Even if it's not apparent at the time, each step brings your child closer to a healthy life.

## **Connect with Other Parents**

*The Partnership for a Drug-Free America offers several ways to help parents share concerns and solutions, including message boards at our website, [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org). We also give parents and caregivers the chance to share their stories.*

**Sign up for the Parent eNewsletters at  
[www.drugfreeCA.org](http://www.drugfreeCA.org)**

## ***The Answers to the Drug Quiz:***

1.) By graduation time, what percent of seniors will have experimented with illegal drugs?

**Correct Answer:** B. More than 50%

In 2002, 53 percent of high school seniors reported having tried an illicit drug.

(Source: Monitoring the Future Survey 2003)

2.) Cigarette smoking among teens has declined significantly over the past five years.

**Correct Answer:** A. True

The percentage of teens who have had a cigarette in the past 30 days has declined from 42 percent to 26 percent in the past five years.

[Source: Partnership Attitude Tracking Survey (PATs) 2003]

3.) Illegal drug trial by teens has declined significantly over the past five years.

**Correct Answer:** A. True

In 2003, 46 percent of teens had tried an illicit drug, compared to 51 percent in 1998.

(Source: PATs 2003)

4.) One of the most important factors in whether kids decide to try drugs is?

**Correct Answer:** B. Understanding the perceived risk of using drugs

Research shows that perception of risk is one of the most important factors in influencing the decision to use drugs.

(Source: Monitoring the Future)

5.) The most popular drug of choice among high school seniors is?

**Correct Answer:** B. Alcohol

77 percent of seniors have used alcohol, 54 percent have used cigarettes, 46 percent have used marijuana and 11 percent have used inhalants.

(Source: MTF 2003)

6.) Because sniffing powdered heroin doesn't require needles, it isn't very risky.

**Correct Answer:** B. False

Heroin, in any form, can cause death

(Source: NIDA)

7.) Most kids get their drugs from:

**Correct Answer:** A. A friend

Of the half of all teens who have been offered drugs, 59% say that the offer came from a friend around their age.

(Source: PATs 2003)

8.) The leading source of information about the risks of drugs for a teen comes from?

**Correct Answer:** B. School

Percentage of teens who have learned a lot about the risks of drugs from...

School lessons or programs: 45 percent

TV commercials: 33

Parents or grandparents: 32 percent

Their friends: 27 percent

The Internet: 22 percent

**(Source: PATs 2002)**